

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 005026

SIPDIS

CENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2015

TAGS: [1Z](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: FALLUJAH: ELECTION WEDDING IN CITY DESPITE
INITIAL BALLOT MATERIAL SHORTAGES

Classified By: POL COUNS Robert Ford, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: Fallujans turned out in large numbers for the December 15, 2005, parliamentary election. Poll site estimates exceeded city leaders, optimistic expectations. The November 30, 2005 murder of the city's mufti, Sheikh Hamza Abass Al-Issawi, motivated the population on top of post-referendum momentum. IECI Al Anbar province operations director, Ra,ad Aboud, told Fallujah Poloff that initial figures showed turnout in Fallujah proper at 140,000, with tens of thousands of additional voters in outlying communities. He estimated that at least 250,000 Fallujah area residents participated, with the turnout of registered voters at between 85-95 percent. Initial shortages of ballot boxes were later largely addressed; however, some Fallujans were turned away from poll sites due to insufficient pre-positioned voting material. IECI workers, co-located at the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center, continue to collate and tally results. The significant turnout should further focus Fallujan attention on the national political track, even while they remain critical of ongoing U.S. military operations, detentions and lagging reconstruction. Fallujah City Council Chairman, Sheikh Kamal Shakir Al-Nazal, suggested to Poloff and Marine FAO that the Iraqi Islamic Party, Ayad Allawi and Saleh Mutlak lists would likely gain a majority of Fallujan votes. END SUMMARY.

HIGH TURNOUT AMID SHORTAGES

[12](#). (C) The mayor of Fallujah, Sheikh Dhari Al-Zobaie, described the day as an "election wedding" with high turnout across the city. Other leaders noted similar satisfaction and Fallujah civic pride. City council chairman, Sheikh Kamal, criticized the IECI for a lack of ballot boxes and number of pre-positioned ballots. He also questioned the accuracy of some voter rolls and absence of female searchers at many polling locations. COMMENT: Initial reports about severe shortages proved to be exaggerated. The IECI allowed Fallujah ballot boxes to contain 1,200 ballots from the standard 600. This exception greatly reduced the shortage. IECI,s Ra,ad Aboud further told Poloff that the commission had distributed 144,000 ballots, which covered all registered voters. END COMMENT.

POLL SITES: FALLUJAH MODEL
SUCCESSFUL A SECOND TIME

[13](#). (C) Fallujah Poloff visited two polling locations election day. At each site, local Iraqi police performed extensive searches and appeared professional and focused on their job. Marines and Iraqi Army provided security in the outer cordons - positioning themselves several hundred meters from polling locations. Notably, there were no serious election-related security incidents in Fallujah, apart from an unidentified explosion mid-day and a small fire fight near the CMOC in the evening. In nearby Karmah, a rocket landed at a site; no one was injured.

[14](#). (C) The atmosphere at both polling sites reflected a community-wide event. Families and children gathered at each location, without a sense of fear. Many were playing. Shuttle buses moved elderly and other residents from neighborhoods to poll sites. In one location, a Fallujan approached Poloff declaring that he had been tortured by the MOI in 2004. COMMENT: he provided initial details that seemed to validate the claims, and agreed to visit the CMOC at a later date to discuss his experience. Another Fallujan claimed that friends, families had to pay between USD 10,000 and USD 20,000 to secure the release of detained family members. Poloff will follow-up. City groups have long pointed to abuse allegations in Baghdad directly targeted at Sunni Arabs. END COMMENT.

[15](#). (C) Another voter told Poloff that the new government needed to act like a real government and not just one of parties. Many criticized the current Jaaferi team as a disaster and infused with Iranians. One voter said he and

many of his friends changed their vehicle registration plates to Baghdad, not Anbar, out of fear of reprisals for coming from the "terrorist haven" of Anbar -- an Iraqi "scarlet A" so to speak.

COMMENT

16. (C) Fallujah remains a politically mobilized city. Voters seek a better future, but also remain skeptical. The ITG and PM Jaaferi have been widely viewed as ineffectual, weak and dominated by sectarian influences and Iranian plots. The recent abuse allegations in MOI detention facilities reinforce outright Sunni Arab fear that a Shia-dominant government will continue to exclude and, more unsettling, to persecute.

17. (C) The leadership shown by imams in Fallujah - calling on residents to participate across many months - remains the single most decisive factor behind the high turnout. The hard-won and high-cost U.S. military and ISF security efforts in the city were a precondition. Wider turnout across the province should translate into a more balanced sense of Anbar's political voices, which, for much of 2005, has primarily been Fallujans at the ballot box. The next election, for the provincial council, will likely highlight intra-Anbar fractures (IIP, secularists, imams). This election, however, revealed a renewed focus on Baghdad politics -- and rising expectations. A majority of Fallujans again chose ballots over bullets. A weak and/or abusive next government could quickly reverse that engaged, while ever anxious, mindset.
KHALILZAD